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Reasons why Mr. Allen believes that...

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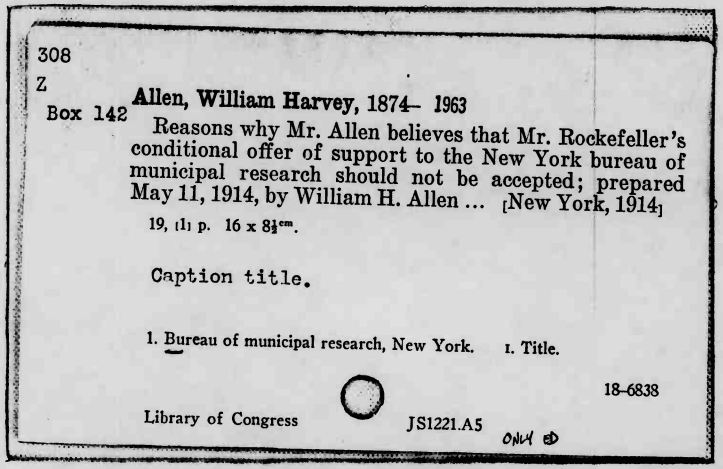

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Reasons Why Mr. Allen Believes that Mr. Rockefeller's Conditional Offer of Support to the New York Bureau of Municipal Research Should Not Be Accepted*

Prepared May 11, 1914

by

WILLIAM H. ALLEN

Director, Bureau of Municipal Research and Training School for Public Service, in the hope of preventing a change in motive and method of these activities.

Presented orally at a trustees' meeting, May 13, 1914

The idea of using New York municipal research work for teaching purposes is worth more to the country than Mr. Rockefeller's promise to help secure $100,000 a year for five years, and the pedagogical idea out of which grew the Training School for Public Service is worth more to the country than Mr. Rockefeller's offer. The pedagogical contribution made by this Bureau is worth more to the country than any pedagogical contribution as yet made by the General Education Board's use of its nearly $50,000,000 endowment

*Stop public school work; divorce Training School from Bureau; stop postal card publicity, stop out-of-town work by Bureau

Mr. Rockefeller's restrictions indicate to me that he does not understand the Bureau's program, method or result. To base the Bureau's future upon the misunderstanding of however liberal a giver, is bound to injure that movement. Similarly, for municipal research to owe a five year underwriting to the financial power of Mr. Rockefeller to get money from men who will not give it for our work's sake (as has been suggested with regard to several prospective givers) will do our cause more harm than good. I list hereafter what I regard as several of the radical misunderstandings of our motives, methods and results:

Misunderstanding No. 1

The Bureau of Municipal Research was never intended to be confined to New York City as recent memoranda has declared in justification of accepting Mr. Rockefeller's conditional offer. Before a dollar was given for municipal research work in New York an elaborate brief was prepared in the autumn of 1905, as printed in Efficient Democracy, calling for a national fund which, as Mr. Murphy (Mr Rockefeller's secretary) put it, "would do for the field of municipal government what our institute for medical research is doing for the field of medicine"

We set out to influence the whole country. The national aspect has proved from the beginning to be a strong appeal to our workers in the field and to our givers. **We have used our out-of-city work to influence our within-the-city work, as well as to help carry our New York City work financially**

NOV. 7, 1923 A67

Misunderstanding No. 2

Pedagogical phases of education cannot be separated from so-called business phases. No one can intelligently participate in considering, analyzing and telling the truth about the board of education budget, that of City College, Normal College, etc., **without starting with an intelligent analysis and true statement of the pedagogical side.** Whether and where sites shall be purchased and buildings erected; how often and how a school census shall be taken; how much the salary roll shall be and how apportioned; whether the young children of the poor shall have a short day—as is considered essential for the well-to-do and the rich, or whether millions of dollars shall be spent upon doing away with what is called part time; whether and how factories shall be enlisted; whether the mayor, the chamberlain, and the president of the board of education shall visit Cincinnati, Gary and Madison, as they are planning to do this month; whether and how the free training school for teachers shall be studied, as is now to be done; whether the division of reference and research shall be under the board of education or under the city superintendent; whether money shall be appropriated for intermediate schools, for fitting up tenements for domestic science, or purchasing typewriters for commercial courses; whether there shall be a teachers' council; whether minimum essential qualifications for important educational officers shall be adopted; whether supervisors shall appraise or help teachers, etc., etc., **cannot honestly be dealt with as business questions until an intelligent pedagogical base is obtained**

Misunderstanding No. 3

No field has been entered by us where other agencies were equipped to cover the field. Even hyper-conscientiously have we avoided fields nominally pre-empted by other societies. Over and over again we have worked with the Public Education Association officials to help draft a plan which would make it unnecessary for us to work in the school field. Repeatedly we have met with the Public Education Association director under the reorganized plan of three years ago to go over its program. We called a conference in 1912 and got two resolutions passed to strengthen the Public Education Association's hold on this city and to broaden its program. We furnished the only worker on their budget committee who did any work

Similarly, we avoided the field of charities until forced little by little to take on this work. Mr. Bruère did his best to get the State Charities' Aid, the Association for Improving the Condition of the Poor, and the Charity Organization Society to carry part of the load of his study of the department of charities, but try our best, we were forced at budget seasons, etc., to ask questions which showed, for example, that the first proposed farm for inebriates, which had been backed by the Prison Association and the State Charities' Aid, was of too high price, of the wrong soil and in the wrong place

We did our best, even to the point of securing money for their work, to get the Academy of Medicine to relieve us of responsibility in the health field; yet were forced to get into the open last summer by our food and typhoid inspection studies showing extreme incompetence

where the Academy's public health council had found and advertised general competence

Misunderstanding No. 4

Work for which special funds have been given has never suffered because of out-of-town work. Mr. Rockefeller says he is more than pleased with the outcome of his fund given for police work. Mrs. Bliss has expressed herself as more than pleased with the result of funds given for health, street cleaning, etc. this last year. Mrs. Harriman has expressed herself as gratified with returns for funds given specifically for school work, which helped toward the establishment of the division of reference and research, to the study of the free training school for teachers, etc., etc. There is not the slightest evidence or indication that every dollar thus spent for specified purposes, has not paid rich dividends. If Mr. Rockefeller wanted to **get done** rather than to **stop,** all he would need to do would be to specify that his money, or money that he might procure, should be used exclusively for New York City. It is only because he wants to **stop** something that he **asks restriction with regard to money he does not propose to give and with regard to men he does not propose to support**

Misunderstanding No. 5

Whether or not work as to the pedagogical side of education is efficient depends upon the result of such work and not upon the man who pays for it. Having a thing done by the

Bureau of Municipal Research does not cause it to be inefficient. There is no reason for the Bureau's not doing anything as well as anybody else can do it. **If it uses the wrong man or the wrong methods, the cure is to substitute the right man and the right methods, and not to surrender its freedom.** Mr. Rockefeller's right to spend his own money as he wishes I do not question. I do question anyone's right, even that of our own board or our own directors, to call an emasculated program by the name of the whole program, or to surrender the right to do what this town and the whole country needs on any other condition than that money be provided to render those benefits through other agencies which want the work done

Misunderstanding No. 6

Lack of program requiring high grade men in New York, rather than distraction due to out-of-town work explains the situation of May, 1914. We were commissioned in December to spend at the rate of a $70,000 budget, plus $40,000 for the Training School for Public Service, plus volunteer service. **We have had since January 1st available service capable of doing more work than could be purchased at market rates for the funds which it is now proposed to secure by the concession to Mr. Rockefeller's restrictions**

We decided to "go slow" on New York work. To embark on large fundamental studies which would be expensive was decided against. We had left open to us the publicity field and short assignment field, with such work as tabulating comparisons of cost for 1914 with 1910, 1912,

etc. Although we had men available for such work we decided not to continue it and materially "shrank" our publicity

For work with the board of estimate and the board of aldermen, we have had more money and more men than ever before. Until quite recently we paid Mr. Wilson's salary while he worked almost exclusively for Mayor Mitchel. We added Mr. Bassett, a high grade engineer, and Mr. West, and had other help available.

For work on civil service we have had available a large fund—Mr. Proctor from the Bureau, and Messrs. Olson, Richardson and Moses from the Training School. Capable Training School men whose combined salaries before they came to us, and whose combined present abilities, represent considerable potential work for New York City, have been sent away from the city, not because of the distractions of out-of-town work, **but because the Bureau did not have a program for serving New York**

A high class experienced engineer has been sent for work in Greenwich, has been used on civil service and in merely visiting the street cleaning department for his own information, when we could have given him a considerable load in New York

Another high class engineer, who is capable of directing several men in carrying several large loads, spends a good part of his time in opening mail and in referring letters for answer that formerly were effectively attended to by a woman assistant at 40% of the cost, and which could in large part be answered through Training School or clerical staff

When Dr. Upson came from Dayton, where his ability has challenged the admiration of the nation, his services might have been enlisted to carry a large local program while directing the Training School. **That they were not so enlisted was not because of our out-of-town engagements**

If the board will examine the cost of writing letters and of handling routine Bureau business, it will find that never in the Bureau's history has the unit cost of this service approximated what we have spent in this year of short funds. Routine copying work that was done last fall by a $15 a week copyist you will find is now being dictated by the office manager to a high grade stenographer. Time cards formerly checked by a clerk requires the cambined time of office manager and a stenographer who was earning $1,600 a year but came to us for $900 for an opportunity to show her ability. **Identical notices that are to go to ten men are dictated ten times, where six months ago they would have been attended to by a copyist and ten copies made at one writing**

With our eyes wide open, while proclaiming the need for home work as excuse for accepting Mr. Rockefeller's judgment we have deliberately sought out-of-town work. Only last week we sought large engagements in Duluth and Grand Rapids

Because we have **lacked program, not because we have lacked money** have we failed to open up new fields at home, and to get the basis of new support at home. Instead of using Mr. Lindars (salary $6,000) for carrying on a tremendous and worthwhile work for the

city, we have been using the greater part of his time for work which this office should have been able to get done without cost through Training School men working under Bureau direction

Misunderstanding No. 7

If our office was found disorganized as is alleged, it is not because we were interested in out-of-town work. On the contrary, we have done our best and used our best brains on organization—Dr. Cleveland, who planned the original method to be used, and Messrs. Bergen, Clowes, Lindars, besides Bruère. Only last fall, for several weeks, we paid an efficiency expert to go over our procedure

Misunderstanding No. 8

The total expense, out of Bureau funds, for out-of-town educational work was less last year by several thousand dollars than the total profits of out-of-town work. The figures which have been given the board as to the cost of bulletin service have included many bulletins which have been printed for purposes specifically supported by gifts from Mrs. Bliss, Mrs. Harriman, etc.; others were paid for by the Training School for Public Service; part of the other charge which has recently been described to you with the implication that it was a Bureau cost, was borne by the Training School fund as a means of training its men in publicity work

Misunderstanding No. 9

To believe that our failure to have funds in 1914 is due to failure of utmost or even considerable effort to get funds is contrary to the record. I have studied private giving in New York for eleven years. I know of no civic work which has ever received so much money for so little effort as the municipal research movement. When we saw men personally we got money. When we stopped seeing people personally we stopped getting money. We failed to realize on one dinner although Mr. Harriman, at a quarter to twelve midnight, protested for the fifth time that every one had known why he had been invited and wanted to settle something, and although Mr. C. S. Smith, Mr. Ogden Mills, Mr. Perkins, Mr. John S. Kennedy, Mr. Vanderlip, Mr. Baker, etc., expressed interest in seeing the Bureau fully financed for five years. That we failed to realize because we did not follow up the dinner with personal appeals, and because when we did write we waited several days, **we all believed at the time**

We always knew that general letters of appeal would not launch or support this movement properly. We have said so frankly in public statements, in our books and reports, at our dinners and in conversation with individuals. We always knew that circular appeals would not raise money for this work unless reiterated and done on a large scale cumulatively. Several times we decided to start—we were always stopped by action of the board

Practically without exception, as the minutes will show, whenever this subject came up before the board of trustees, Mr. Cutting most generously asked that the matter be left with him, or sometimes with him and the finance committee. Again, practically without exception, this has meant that Mr. Cutting personally bore the deficit, and effort to raise money stopped

When the treasurership became vacant last fall, a memorandum was sent to all members of the board and personal conversation was held with several members, urging the possibility and the desirability of selecting a treasurer with special reference to his ability and willingness to help raise money. The board decided otherwise **after less than a minute's consideration.** It is doubtful if the equivalent of half an hour a year has been averaged by the trustees of the Bureau of Municipal Research to the thought of raising money, if we except Mr. Cutting's personal sacrifice of time and money

If the above statements are true and the record confirms them, **can our board fairly say to the public that it has done its utmost to raise funds before considering Mr. Rockefeller's offer?**

When Mr. Bruère protested, as he did frequently, I recalled that we had been asked as directors **to forget about raising money and to produce results,** and insisted that we should not be concerned so long as Mr. Cutting chose to assume responsibility. I personally insisted that Mr. Cutting would see through an undertaking which he had assumed, and that it would be wiser for us to keep on doing what we had been asked to do, rather than to divert our energies to money raising before called upon to do so

If the trustees will count the number of prominent men or women in New York City who after being personally seen by trustees or directors about the Bureau program, have refused to give money toward it, they will be surprised at the smallness of the number **which can be counted on one hand**

The one way to get money for our kind of work, as we have always known, was to go after it personally (unless we wished to embark upon a slow, up-hill advertising program.) It has been the same in every other city. It is so with colleges. It will always be so, as a study of voluntary giving will show. The experience of other cities shows also, however, that **when personal effort is made it has been surprisingly easy to raise money for this kind of work**

How slowly other methods of appeal produce results may be shown from the records of the Association for Improving the Condition of the Poor. Since 1907 it has appealed by personal address to a mailing list of formerly 20,000—probably much larger of late—at least four times a year. For the six years 1907-1913 that means a minimum of 120,000 appeals, by an agency with a creditable record going back 70 years, for spectacular kinds of charitable work. In addition, it has spent several thousand dollars a year ($2,246 in 1913) in newspaper advertising which reached hundreds and hundreds of thousands over and over again. **Yet, the net increase of 1913 over 1907 from general appealing after all these appeals was only about $10,000!**

Between 1906 and 1913 the net increase for the Charity Organization Society due both to advertising and personal appeals for all its work,

except relief, was only $29,600. **The increase from newspaper appeals from 1908-1913 was less than $2,500 in spite of all the free advertising, and the net increase from the personal letters which have gone out by thousands was less than $1,500. The total amount from newspaper appeals in 1913 was only $5,500; from personal letters only $14,000.** After all its years of two appeals a year through lectures and sermons and trade appeals the Saturday and Sunday Hospital Association raised $113,000 in 1913, and the Presbyterian Hospital, with a system of appeals going to thousands of people and in spite of its splendid history, raised only $33,150 in 1913

Misunderstanding No. 10

The Bureau of Municipal Research cannot afford to owe its existence to Mr. Rockefeller enthusiastic; much less can it afford to owe its existence to Mr. Rockefeller imposing restrictions. The New York Bureau is regarded as the parent organization. "If this works in New York," as Mr. Harriman once said, "it will work everywhere." To have a movement which has accomplished what we all believe this has accomplished, fall back after a splendid record of nine years upon a restricted program defined and chiefly financed by Mr. Rockefeller, **will,** I believe, **be a blow at our present Bureau of Municipal Research and at what has come to be known as the municipal research method of interesting the whole public in the public's business**

Misunderstanding No. 11

To regard the acceptance of restrictions as a lesser evil than even a temporary suspension of New York's present unrestricted Bureau is, I believe, to misread the purposes and standing of the municipal research movement. Once before when Mr. ——— and Mr. ——— asked us (on threat of attacking our financial support) not to publish a report on the ——— department, **our trustees unanimously agreed with Chairman Seligman's statement that accepting such a proposition from the outside** would be "the beginning of the end of the Burean's influence in New York"

We have made capital of the fact that we have looked at all these questions from the public's point of view and in the public's interest. As one of the many men who have given their best to this movement, I should never again expect the public to believe that I was capable of looking at this question solely from the public's point of view, if it became known that I had promised to accept for five years restrictions as to field or method, such as those which Mr. Rockefeller asks our board to consider and which Mr. Cutting has informed me are to be accepted

To cause the public throughout the United States to question the independence of the New York Bureau of Municipal Research and of men who have gone out from it is, I believe, to **strike at the capital-character of every one of these men.** We have frequently been charged with being agents of "Wall Street," "capital," etc. We have always had a conclusive answer. Personally I do not believe that we shall ever

again have a conclusive answer after the world knows that the Bureau men are being paid out of funds given with the proposed restrictions

Misunderstanding No. 12

It is not without significance that this offer from Mr. Rockefeller came the very day we placed in his hands proof that an attack upon the Bureau and Training School which had been written by one of his General Education Board agents was "not a criticism, but a disparagement." Nor is it without significance that the prejudiced character of Abraham Flexner's report on the Bureau's educational activities was obviously due to conditions within the New York board of education, which he claimed this Bureau had helped to bring about; that our trustees approved a statement which said not a word in defense of two friends of ours whom he unjustly attacked, to whom the Bureau and New York City owe a great deal—Messrs. Churchill, president of the board of education, and Metcalfe, school editor of the Globe; and that our statement frankly avowed that our trustees had answered Mr. Flexner without examining and without endorsing the Bureau's record with regard to New York City's public schools

Untrue and unfair statements regarding momentous service in New York City's public schools have been made of late not only in the Flexner disparagement of the Bureau, but in statements bearing the signature of representatives of several national foundations including some financed by Mr. Rockefeller, and of several local foundations. **For the Bureau to**

accept restrictions with regard to its part in the educational discussions of New York City will convince all who read of such acceptance that the Bureau and its representatives can be used to buttress unfair and untrue attacks upon men serving the schools, and reactionary opposition to democratic consideration of New York school problems

The offer of Mr. Rockefeller was first repeated to me by two of our trustees, one of whom began the interview by saying: "If it were not for the money I would never have listened to it". **For trustees of the Bureau to promise to avoid any field whatsoever for any person whomsoever or for any consideration whatsoever,** I personally regard as **contrary to the principles which originated the Bureau** and as an **extravagant bargain both in influence and in money.** The fact that it is Mr. Rockefeller who proposes the restriction does not mitigate the danger which surely exists

Misunderstandings No. 13—17

No. 13. To restrict the Training School work in New York to Bureau supervision as in the proposed reorganization, is unfair to the Training School and an unjustifiable restriction of its capabilities as I wrote Mr. Cutting from the University of Wisconsin survey, May 4, last

No. 14. To deprive the national organization of a name which shows its lineage (as part of New York and other municipal research up to 1914) would, I believe, injure both services

No. 15. To assume that the national organization shall not have a direct permanent New York working base will, I believe, defeat in large measure its purpose and limit its usefulness

No. 16. To restrict Bureau men to New York City and New York State will, I believe, work injury to both the local Bureau and the country and will fail to develop men big enough even for the New York work

No. 17. To divorce the Training School for Public Service from the Bureau will hurt both the School and the Bureau

Misunderstanding No. 18

Defects of administration and not incurable defects of organization will explain such difficulties as we are now considering in the relation of a multi-motivated New York Bureau. Work will be better done by men who are using their work for teaching purposes. Teaching will be better done by men who are responsible for "making good" in their work. Local interest will be best served by men who feel that they are serving a nation. Larger men will come into the municipal research field if that field, through successive steps, is New York, plus the country, plus training everywhere, than if that field is New York only

Getting these different kinds of service out of the same group of men under the same name is a matter of **administering their time and does not require the degree of separation in**

name, in function and in men that the proposed reorganization contemplates

The rest of the country wants men who have helped do a great work and not men who can merely talk about it. If the New York Bureau of Municipal Research fails to serve these many purposes, it will only invite some other agency under some other name to step in to meet the country's demand for **practical men who teach,** for **teachers who are doing practical work,** for **men of national vision to do local work,** and **men with reputation for success in local work to carry on national propaganda**

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN SURVEY

The Capitol. Madison, Wisconsin

September, 1914

The conditional offer, herein opposed, came in April just as, with the trustees' hearty approval, I was leaving New York City for the University of Wisconsin Survey and a survey of Milwaukee's truancy and medical departments

In May, after extended correspondence with Bureau officials, I returned to consider with the trustees of the Bureau of Municipal Research, who were not abroad or out of the city, a proposed reorganization which included provisions to secure financial support conditioned upon radical sacrifices of Bureau program, method and accountability to the public. I was officially told that except for my objections there was unanimity of intention to accept this offer with conditions

For hours on May 9th and 13th I was urged "not to make a moral issue out of a mere question of expediency," and to humor the wish of Mr. Rockefeller and others to "eliminate the Bureau from the New York school fight"; i. e., the fight to secure democratic, progressive, informed management of New York City's school system

Money plus trustees' support was offered me then and later, verbally and in writing, if I would work outside New York City. I replied each time that I did not want money for however good a cause from men who would desert a winning program such as our school program.

The trustees disbanded May 13th without motion to refuse the conditional offer. At a later meeting, however, it was voted "that no subscriptions or contributions be received subject to any conditions or limitations as to the future activities of the Bureau "

Yet gifts of $55,000 from Mr. Rockefeller followed shortly, part for the Bureau, part for so-called "scientific research" to be by Bureau men, but not under the trustees' direction. The original conditions, however technically rejected, have in large part been lived up to

On June 18th I wrote the trustees that I would rather be "alone in New York with our old program than have Mr. Rockefeller's millions but minus our program"

What I still believe I then affirmed—"With little money but with our old program the Bureau can accomplish more during the next ten years than Mr. Rockefeller can hope to accomplish with his tens of millions if he continues to work with the restricted vision which he has used and would now have the New York Bureau of Municipal Research adopt"

When newspapers in July obtained from other sources than myself a rumor of the "Rockefeller conditions," I referred them to Bureau officers for the truth. The official statements as published were contrary to the record in letter and in inference.

The character of New York City's municipal research movement and training for public service has changed. The change is being widely felt

I had hoped by September to be free to place the facts before several trustees who were away when the Rockefeller offer with its progeny of ill-judged or unsupported action, evasions, misstatements, lethargy and silence on vital matters was officially acted upon

Duties here, however, confine me until December to the University of Wisconsin Survey. I can do nothing now but resign from the New York Bureau of Municipal Research and to record clearly and publicly the grounds of my protest against accepting money in exchange for the momentum of independence and unbound vision

WILLIAM H. ALLEN

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